

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
COVERING VIDEO GAMES, ANIMÉ,
AND RELATED TOPICS
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ON SCREEN CHAOS



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*Magic
Knight
Rayearth*

ON SCREEN CHAOS

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WELCOME!

... to the first issue of *On Screen Chaos*! You may have noticed the name change on last month's cover, but now, it's officially in the masthead. We decided to make the change because, since its inception nine months ago, *On Screen* has grown to be more than just a newsletter.

As long-time readers already know, we've branched out into the OnScreen Animation Society and the On Screen Fighting Federation. So starting this month, *On Screen Chaos* is now the official newsletter of the On Screen Society, a catch-all title for all of our endeavors. *Chaos* seemed an appropriate addendum, since that's the perpetual state we seem to be in.

Now that we've cleared that up, let me congratulate Neal "Happosai" Mulcahy on his glorious victory in the OSFF Championship Tournament. There's already a lot of people gunning for a title shot!

Let me also apologize in advance for anything odd that may happen. We're working on making the transition from Quark Xpress 3.32 to 4.01, and there's bound to be some kinks to work out. Since we're already making a software transition, we're going to try some cosmetic changes, too (like the aforementioned new masthead). If they don't work out, we'll nix 'em, no biggie, and this paragraph will be the only evidence you'll ever see of them.

That's about all I've got to say, in what is probably by now the longest "Welcome!" column yet. Thanks to our correspondent Svenyip, who runs a rental store, we've got lots of new games ready to review.

So spread the word, have some fun, and once again, to borrow a phrase from my colleague, thanks for hangin' with the clique.

-TONY "XOT" MORSE
On Screen Editor

say **WHA7??!!**

Some of our favorite interpretations of assorted fighting game quotes. Submissions welcome! If you don't get it, you haven't played the game!

"Take out the dog!" -Raiden's "Superman,"
Mortal Kombat 2

"What a cool move" -Guy's winning pose,
Street Fighter Alpha 1

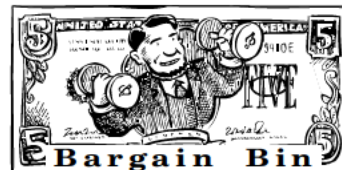
"I'm a ponytail!" -Ranma's Sweet Chestnut
Fist, Ranma 1/2: Hard Battle

"Nasty puzzle kick!" -Blair's kick super,
Street Fighter EX+α

In Your House a less than perfect WWF followup

System: *Sega Saturn*
Publisher: *Acclaim*
Release Date: *1996*

TONY "XOT" MORSE
On Screen Editor



WWF: In Your House, named after the endless series of pay-per-view events, attempts to improve upon the excellent engine of its predecessor, *WWF Wrestlemania: The Arcade Game*. Unfortunately, it does not entirely succeed.

IYH presents a cast of several new characters, presumably the top WWF stars at the time of its programming, with a few returning from *Wrestlemania*. Your ten choices are Shawn Michaels, Bret and Owen Hart, Vader, Goldust, Ahmed Johnson, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, the Ultimate Warrior, the Undertaker, and the British Bulldog, Davey Boy Smith. An interesting amalgam, to say the least. Unlike a true fighting game, though, the big men don't play like grapplers, and the returning characters bear very little resemblance to their *Wrestlemania* counterparts.

Still, on the surface, this is an excellent game engine, with dial-a-combo style supers, throw reversals, and the ability to attack a downed opponent. Added to the existing engine are power-up icons that can be beneficial or detrimental, by taking from or adding to your life or combo meter, affecting your speed, stunning you, or giving you double damage capabilities. Most of these powerups are worthless, with the exception of the double damage icon, which makes the already short matches even shorter. Even normal moves do large percentages of damage. And since you can't tell which icon it is before you pick it up, you may as well just shut off the icons completely in the option menu.

Also added into the MK-style engine (did I mention block and run buttons?) are "super pins;" essentially, really, *really* lame fatalities, in which such wonderful things as giant championship belts and wrestlers' icons crush your opponent. The best of the bad are the obvious Mortal Kombat rip-offs: Ultimate Warrior's Raiden-esque lightning zap and HHH's Mileena-esque fatal where he sucks you into a perfume bottle. Eep.

Once again, IYH showcases the Saturn's incredible lack of digitization capabilities. These characters, like Revolution X's, often look like nothing more than colorful pixelated messes. And if there was any questioning of the truth in this statement, the opening and

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Tactics another Square masterpiece

Latest Final Fantasy title combines strategy, simulation & role playing



System: Sony Playstation

Publisher: Square Soft

Release Date: January 28, 1998

MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE
On Screen Correspondent

First things first. This is the first game that's impressed me enough for a while now to actually make me go out and buy a copy for myself. It has its share of flaws, granted, but it's still definitely worth a look if you're at all into "strategy fantasy" games.

The thing that I like most about it may be an element that would turn some people away from the game, however. It's *complex*. The simplest way to describe it would be to compare it to previous strategy fantasy games, such as Vandal Hearts for the Playstation, and the Shining Force series for the Sega Genesis (and soon, apparently, the Sega Saturn as well). You have a bunch of people on your side, each controlled as an individual unit, moving over various terrain and attacking either with swords, bows, spells or songs, depending on the character's abilities.

What makes Tactics so great is that there are twenty standard classes in the game, and every character in your party can switch between each of the classes, learning from all of them, until you have each person shaped as you ideally want them to be able to fight. The two base classes are Squire and Chemist. Training as a Squire opens up two of the fighting classes, Knight and Archer. Training as a Chemist gives you the magical routes, that of the Priest and Wizard. Further training in any of these classes will open up even more specialized classes for mastery, and some special classes (like Samurai or Ninja) can only be chosen once you are adept in several different fields.

Just because you've trained in a class, however, doesn't necessarily mean you'll be able to use the abilities. Each class has standard, reaction, support and movement abilities that you can train in. Every character can choose a Primary and Secondary class to have access to all the standard abilities that have been trained. (Priests, for instance, have healing and protective spells as their primary abilities, whereas Chemists offer the ability to throw Potions and other items in battle.) In addition, a character can choose *one* reaction, support and movement ability from all the appropriate skills they've learned from the classes. (Again, as an example, a character could select the Knight's reaction ability of "Parry physical attack," the Wizard's support ability of "Magic attack up," and the Squire's movement ability of "Move +1.") While this seemed a little restrictive to me at first, it's still a lot better than most games which force most characters to play as a single class for the entire game.

The combats, unlike Shining Force or Vandal Hearts, you have to be brutally careful in, especially at first. When a character runs out of Hit Points and falls, they will be dead and *forever gone* after two or three full combat turns. Healing spells or items won't bring them back, either – only a Revive Spell or ability, or the item Phoenix Down, can restore a mortally wounded character (or winning the fight before that character fully dies).

How effective a character's spells are is determined by the Faith of the caster, the Faith of the target (the higher your Faith, the more you will be affected by *any* spell, whether a healing or harmful one), and how "compatible" the two characters are. Final Fantasy Tactics is also known as the "Zodiac Brave Story," and it has a complex Zodiac Chart to determine how effective attacks and spells will be on targets of differing Zodiac signs. I still haven't analyzed this fully, but I know that the Monk in my party must be very incompatible with the healer, as her Revive spells only work on him about 60% of the time!

The story is also very complex. From the beginning, the game bombards you with different names and events, and the whole first chapter of the game ends up being nothing more than a large flashback. I found it very difficult to remember which person was a part of which army, and even at times who was a friend and who was a foe. Fortunately, there is a story section of the game that can be enabled at any time, giving you information about the story up to this point, about each of the characters, and other events. It also updates from time to time, when knowledge about a character changes in some way. I ended up using this feature frequently when I found myself hopelessly lost.

My biggest problem with the game, though, would have to be the translation job. It isn't that bad, really, but sometimes words are either forgotten or jumbled together, and other times the translation was just so word-for-word literal that the actual *meaning* of what is being said is lost. There are still some excellent conversations in the game, talking about normally taboo subjects such as God and religion, but much of my confusion with the game and the characters revolves around the way it was translated.

My other gripe would have to be the difficulty level. This game is *rough*! Many of the fights were literally a matter of luck, being able to hit with the right attack at the right time to defeat the main enemy just before my entire party was wiped out. Some battles I needed to try about a dozen times before I could get by them with my whole party still intact. But while I would often gripe about the difficulty, I'd much rather play a game like this rather than one with the difficulty of Final Fantasy VII, where you almost had to *try* to get yourself killed most of the time.

All in all, Final Fantasy Tactics is a complex, quirky, difficult game that I like a lot. Having finally beaten it last night (with a total play time of about 35 hours plus all the failures and resets that weren't added in), I now need to replay it so I can discover where Cloud, the hero of Final Fantasy VII, is hidden so I can find and use him as a party member.

First-ever OSFF Champion is crowned

Neal “Happosai” Mulcahy handily dispatches his opposition

MICHAEL “SVENYIP” TROUPE
On Screen Correspondent

(Author's Note: Remember that every person at a given activity will have their own, unique perspective of what happened. Thus, you'll notice a natural tendency for me to emphasize matches that I was involved in more than the others because, well, they were the ones I competed in.)

The first ever Fighting Championship for the On Screen Fighting Federation Championship Belt has come to an end. And, as I rather expected, I failed to come home with the gold. I did, however, put up good enough of a showing to make myself the clear “Number One Contender” to challenge for the belt again some other day. But I'm getting ahead of myself ...

There were five competitors in this tournament (in case you missed the last newsletter). Myself, Brian, Neal, Shawn and Tony. Each person fought all others two times in a series of ten different games, designed to show which person was the best overall fighting game player. A combination of skill, the ability to adjust to unfamiliar games, and pure luck was necessary at times to succeed.

The first of the games was Battle Arena Toshinden for the Playstation. This, I'd say, was probably my best game of the tournament, with all the hours of play I'd logged in it in the past. Weird happenings, such as win/ring-out double KOs and Shawn and Tony's abilities to ring *themselves* out, were commonplace. In the end, Neal and I tied with 7 points each (each beating all our other foes and splitting 1-1 against each other) and Shawn and Tony were tied with 3 points each (each beating Brian and splitting against each other.)

I should point out here that Brian has no doubt wasted far less of his life than the rest of us playing fighting games. But there were still many times when he game within an inch of defeating one or the other of us, so the numbers don't always tell the whole story.

The second game was Mortal Kombat II for the Super Nintendo. I hadn't played this one in quite a while, and had to rely on “old reliable” Shang Tsung to mask the fact that I didn't remember the physics of this port all that well. Tony had the best timing out of any of us with uppercutting other people out of the sky (a skill I've always been weak in), whereas I just threw fireballs and tried to get cheesy wins in most of my fights. It must have worked, because Neal, Tony and I each got 6 points, tying for first and splitting against each other. Brian and Shawn also split against each other, getting 1 point each.

The third game was King of Fighters '95 for the Playstation. I expected this one to be a weaker game for me, until I remembered a couple of characters that had simple special moves and high-priority regular attacks. Clark, in particular (affectionately called “Blah!” because that's what it sounds like the announcer is saying when he says his name) was a game-saver for me. Neal and I tied with 7 points each again (splitting against each other), Tony got 3 points (beating Shawn twice and splitting against Brian), Shawn got two points (beating Brian twice), and Brian got 1 point against

Tony.

The fourth game was Street Fighter Alpha 2 Gold for the Playstation. This was where I knew real fear, as Tony had fought me to a standstill with his Dan earlier in the day, and since *nobody* at my end of the world plays much VS Street Fighter games, I was somewhat out of practice. Neal's always been better at Street Fighter than the rest of us, and it showed, as he swept all of us for an undisputed 8 point victory. I came in second, splitting with Tony and ending up with 5 points. Tony split with both me and Shawn, and got 4 points. Shawn split with Tony and Brian for 2 points, and Brian got 1 point for his split with Shawn. (Confused yet?)

The fifth game was Marvel Super Heroes for the Saturn. Since my “air launcher” skills to start dial-a-combos were less than impressive, I went with simple raw damage in the form of Juggernaut. I discovered that Juggernaut/Juggernaut fights result in slowdown almost as bad as the Playstation version, and Shawn apparently can be broken down into a helpless ball, unable to defend himself, if you utter the words “Web Ball” correctly. (I guess you had to be there.) Neal and I split once again, with 7 points each. Tony beat Shawn and Brian for 4 points, and Shawn ended up with 2.

Super Street Fighter II Turbo for the Playstation was next - I wonder if I'd have done better if there had been less Street Fighter games in the tournament? Probably not, all things considered, as I put up a fair showing here as well. Neal came in first with 7 points, splitting only against Tony. I got 6 points, winning all my fights except against Neal who beat me both times. Tony had 5 points, and Shawn got 2.

Night Warriors for the Saturn. The seventh game, and the one that guaranteed my downfall in the tournament. I'm not quite sure what it is, but I've always been lousy at the Darkstalkers series, and I got torn apart here. Neal got the undisputed win with the big 8 points. Shawn and Tony tied for second, Shawn splitting with Tony and Brian and destroying me, and Tony split with Shawn and me and beat Brian 2-0. I got 3 points in this one, and Brian had 1. It just goes to show you that playing characters similar to Ryu and Ken like they were *identical* to Ryu/Ken will get you beaten by people who actually know how to *use* their characters.

Demoralized, but not finished yet, I went on to Ranma 1/2 on the Super Nintendo. All I want to know is, *why* was this game in the tournament? It turned into a “I do my special move for 30% which you run into, then you do the same thing” game. Not too much skill here, but it wasn't completely random either, as the results showed. Neal and Shawn tied for first with 6 points, each of them splitting with me and each other. I got 5 points because I also split with Tony, and Tony ended up with 3 points. The only thing *good* about this game is at least the matches went fast.

Samurai Shodown III for the Playstation suffers from long load times and limited animation. Nonetheless, it was on the list of games, so we had no choice but to play in it. (By this point, as you might be able to imagine, some of us were getting kinda frazzled by having to play so many fighting games in a row without much of a

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Magic Knight a classic animé fantasy series

TONY "XOT" MORSE
On Screen Editor

Magic Knight Rayearth is one of those series that it's really hard to call revolutionary or unique, but that you just can't help but enjoy.

Magic Knight follows most of the usual animé conventions. We start out with three young girls, Fu, Umi, and Hikaru who are transported to the mystical world of Cefiro to fulfill the prophecy of the Magic Knights. Each girl fits fairly well into a traditional RPG-style character role. The eventual leader, Hikaru, is the smallest of the bunch and possesses that burning sense of honor that makes everyone want to just line up behind her. Umi-Chan is the down-to-earth non believer whose abilities only come out when the truth hits her in the head. This silly girl's actions and dialogue make her seem like a rejected Sailor Scout. Finally, Fu-Chan is the traditional smarty-pants and healer-type. She does, however, possess a few offensive spells as well. Each girl's abilities are elemental based; fire, water, and earth, respectively.

The animation is up to the usual high standards of most quality animé. Following in the steps of *Dragon Half*, when the characters get into comically frustrating situations, their 'sprites' shift to Super Deformed style, almost as if you needed a visual cue that this was sup-

posed to be funny. Also like *Dragon Half*, there's a bouncy marshmallow type guy, Mokono, who tends to lead the group whenever they forget where they're going.

Like other series, *Magic Knight* also follows the standard format of set up the situation, introduce big enemy, and beat up said enemy at the end of the episode. Some of the boss types are really cool (Ascot, the child wizard/summoner) while others are hapless and unoriginal (Alcyone, the obligatory leather-clad sorceress). Unfortunately, we don't always get a new enemy every episode.

Not to be dismissed is the stellar soundtrack, composed by Koichi Sugiyama, who also composed the music in the *Dragon Quest* (*Dragon Warrior* in the States) video game series. The opening theme in particular is quite catchy, and I've found myself chanting a little bit of Janglish to its tune here and there.

I know this ends up sounding like a negative review, but I really like watching the *Magic Knight* series. I mean, first off, there really isn't that much bad animé. Secondly, how can you not enjoy watching armored schoolgirls play with swords and sorcery? Admittedly, *Magic Knight* is not one of the most original animé series I've ever seen. But it does execute a tried-and-true formula nearly to perfection, resulting in an enjoyable viewing experience.



More results & commentary on the OSFF Championship Tournament

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break.) I learned to like the game in a strange way by the end, though, because it was the only game in the *entire* Tournament that Neal did not either get first place or tie for first. Shawn and I tied for first this time with 6 points, as I gained the honor of being the *only* person to win 2-0 against Neal in *any* game. I also split with Shawn and Tony, and Shawn split with me and Neal. Neal and Tony tied for second with 4 points each.

We then headed downstairs for the final match of the tournament, on *Street Fighter II Turbo*, the arcade game. I had done some quick calculations at this point, and believed that it was almost impossible for me to win at this point. (It turned out I was right - the best I could do is tie against Neal if I won everything and he lost everything.) Still, I fought with my old standard weapon - Zangief. While I fought with little more than jumping fierce, various roundhouse kicks, throws and the SPD, it was enough to get the job done. Somewhat cranky (but not surprised) with failing to win (okay, I'm a sore loser, so what?) I proceeded to try to smash my way through the ranks, and was reasonably successful in that. Neal and I tied for first one last time with 7 points each (yes, we split again), Tony got 3 points (beating Brian and splitting with Shawn), Shawn got 2 (splitting with both Brian and Tony) and Brian got 1 point.

After that, all that remained was to calculate the final results, and to confirm what everybody else already knew. So in case you're curious (or in the more likely case that you didn't want to juggle all the numbers up above and just want a final victory tally) here are the final results:

First Place: Neal [67 wins, 13 losses]
Second Place: Mike [59 wins, 22 losses]
Third Place: Tony [39 wins, 41 losses]
Fourth Place: Shawn [30 wins, 50 losses]
Fifth Place: Brian [5 wins, 75 losses]

The closest competitors were also closely matched with each other in terms of overall skill. Neal beat me 12 times whereas I beat him 8. Tony beat Shawn 12 times whereas Shawn beat him 8.

For his victory over the rest of us, Neal was given the coveted OSFF Championship belt, as well as Japanese imports of the fighting games *King of Fighters '95* and *Battle Arena Toshinden 3*. But if I have anything to say about it, his reign and possession of the championship will be short lived indeed.

However, if I challenge the champion, I must somehow beat him two out of three falls in *three* different games. And if you look at the tournament results and see just how often we were evenly matched, I'd need more than my fair share of luck to *ever* pull that off.

On the other hand, the champion also has the option to challenge anybody else to a Champion's Challenge, where he gets to choose the game, but it's just a three-out-of-five contest, winner take all. And while the numbers show that the odds are still against me, I might have a chance there ...

So Neal, next time you're in my neck of the woods, I'm calling you out. You bring the belt, I'll bring the games, and who knows? Maybe we can bounce the title back and forth all day until the cows come home.

I WANT THE BELT! =>

Can 'modernized' classics make money?

Namco puts Pac-Man, Dig Dug and Rally X back into the arcades

MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE
On Screen Correspondent

In a bowling alley up in Northampton, Massachusetts, I found a strange arcade game. I'm not even sure what the official name of it is. Basically, it is a "six in one" machine that has both classic and "arranged" versions of Pac-Man, Dig Dug and Rally-X. I only had the chance to play the game twice while I was there, and I chose to play the new versions of Dig Dug and Pac-Man. They were like no version I'd ever seen before.

Let's start with Dig Dug. That's a game that I haven't played in quite a while, so it's possible that some of the features I think are new have always existed in the game. The basic premise is still the same, pump up your enemies until they explode or crush them with rocks to defeat them.

The main difference in the arranged version is that the graphics are a lot better drawn now, there's a "World of Dig Dug" graphic between each stage showing you how much of the game you've completed (apparently, once you defeat around 30 levels or so the game will end), and there are a bunch of new wacky power-ups you can get. There's one item that changes your pump into a six-shooter, destroying any enemy you fire at in a single shot. Another item acts like the "water" power up in Bubble Bobble, running down the paths that you have dug and destroying any enemies hit.

There are also new types of enemies. There's one weird guy with a spike on his forehead that seems to be able to dash horizontally to try and attack you. There were others as well, but I haven't got the best memory in the world.

Pac-Man, on the other hand, was full of all sorts of differences, both in game play and in graphics. For one, it's drawn in this weird slanted 2D style, and Pac Man looks a lot like the three-dimensional version found in the Pac-Mania game. There are a large variety of mazes and locations for where the power pellets can be found.

As for the enemies, there are now five ghosts to be found on each level. While four of them act like standard ghosts, the fifth one is double-sized and has different abilities depending on the level. Sometimes, it gains the power to speed dash occasionally. Other times, an X will appear where your Pac-Man is, and two seconds later it will jump to that location.

Energizer pellets for the first several levels last for a long time. If you eat the double-sized ghost, you will gain double points for each ghost you eat after that point. The action no longer stops when you eat a ghost, you just slow down briefly for a moment and keep on going.

There are two forms of bonus you can get now, one is found in the usual "fruit" location of the level, the other appears at your starting point. Some items that you eat will speed up your Pac-Man for several seconds, another causes a giant "bucket" to appear in the Ghost Home, suck all the ghosts inside, and keep them paralyzed there for about ten seconds before they can come back out. And the strangest power up of all gives you a "mirror image" of your Pac-Man on the same horizontal line as you, but positioned on the other side of the board as you. This mirror image can eat items and ghosts, but cannot be killed.

The stages are always drawn so that the left side of the board is identical to the right side. (Otherwise the mirror image mentioned above wouldn't work right.) Other than your standard tunnels, there are "dash" arrows which speed you up for about three seconds when you run over one (or until you crash into a wall). Some stages also have "jump" points. You enter one jump point, and a couple seconds later you will appear at the other end like a sort of invisible tunnel. The ghosts can use the jump points, and they might also be able to use the dash arrows.

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VERSION UPDATE

A lot of fans of the Mortal Kombat series were kind of dismayed with Mortal Kombat 4 in the arcade. Granted, it had a much better and more playable game engine than MK3 did, but the fatalities – the meat and milk of the game to many players – were limited to just one per character and a single pit fatality (a fan toss in this case), similar to the original Mortal Kombat.

But to those missing the days of being able to choose how to finish their victims, there is hope. The new version of MK4, Revision 3.0, should be shipping soon to arcades all over the country. While gameplay hasn't been changed too much, this version includes one new fatality per character, a new pit fatality (the return of the Spiked Ceiling from MK2), and the rumor of three hidden characters. (One of them, Meat, is nothing more than a "bloody skeleton" that is used in place of any other character, but has all of that character's moves and finishers.)

The problem is, some of these new finishers are either not that impressive or just remakes of old popular fatals. Sonya and Tanya merely do a throw or breaker move which they show from three different angles, then snap their victim's neck and end the fatality. Scorpion morphs into a Scorpion, Johnny Cage gets his old "head decapitation uppercut" back, Sub-Zero has a modified version of his "ice statue shatter" from MK2, Jarek has an "eye beam fatal" similar to Kano of MK3, and so on.

As a result, it wouldn't surprise me if some arcades never bother to upgrade their systems to Revision 3.0. Mortal Kombat 4 has done well since it came out, but it has never been able to recapture the "glory days" when everyone would line up to play it, back around the time Mortal Kombat 2 was out. (Maybe too many people remember MK3 and Ultimate MK3 and laugh?) But I'll play it if and when it comes out - if only because I feel it's my civic duty to confirm all the different fatalities that are listed out there on the 'Net for myself.

Resident Evil 2 not a disappointing sequel

Fans of the original will love it, but average gamers may not be impressed

System: Sony Playstation

Publisher: Capcom

Release Date: January 22, 1998

MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE
On Screen Correspondent

This was probably one of the most anticipated releases for the Playstation. Many gamers for a long time felt that the first Resident Evil was one of the best games for the system, and expected great things of the sequel. Capcom ended up delaying the game for several months after the original anticipated release date (a very common thing in today's gaming market), which only added to the anticipation.

Then you've got me. A minority in the Playstation gaming world, I was unimpressed with both Resident Evil and both of the Tomb Raider games, considering them to be over hyped. So I went into Resident Evil 2 with a skeptical mind.

They did a good job with it, though. Unlike the first Resident Evil, which was several minutes of dialogue - dialogue that you had to listen to EVERY time you played a new game - then one brief zombie encounter, followed by more dialogue and then some fairly linear gameplay, Resident Evil 2 throws you right into the action. There's you, your gun, a burning city, and about four zombies coming at you at once.

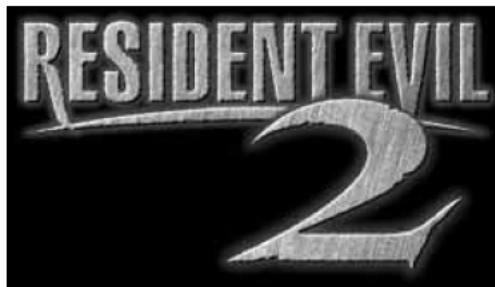
Most players playing on Normal difficulty won't get very far on their first attempt. Unable to resist the urge to fire on the zombies like a madman, they'll discover that they only have about fifteen shots in the

gun, and that a knife is lousy protection against the undead. (The Easy difficulty gives you several spare clips, about 120 extra bullets overall, which makes wanton destruction that much easier to get away with.) So you'll be forced to duck, dodge and weave your way through the city, only destroying the zombies that absolutely MUST be defeated, until you find more and stronger firepower.

Once you get into the Police Station, however (which serves the same purpose as the mansion did in the original Resident Evil), the game slows down somewhat and you almost turn into a mailman, delivering "packages" (items, keys, whatever) to different parts of the game to unlock new rooms. And while new surprises occasionally showed up, walking past the same hallways over and over again rapidly became tedious.

Keep in mind, though, that I've only played the game for about three hours, so it might get more interesting later on. Much like the first one, though, it didn't capture my interest that much, and I haven't even looked at it since I acquired Final Fantasy Tactics. But from what I've heard, there is a lot of replay value - each character has two separate missions, and there are also hidden characters with their own short scenarios.

Overall, if you loved Resident Evil, you should be very impressed and satisfied with the sequel. If you were indifferent to it like me, you'll like the first hour or so, but then will rapidly lose interest.



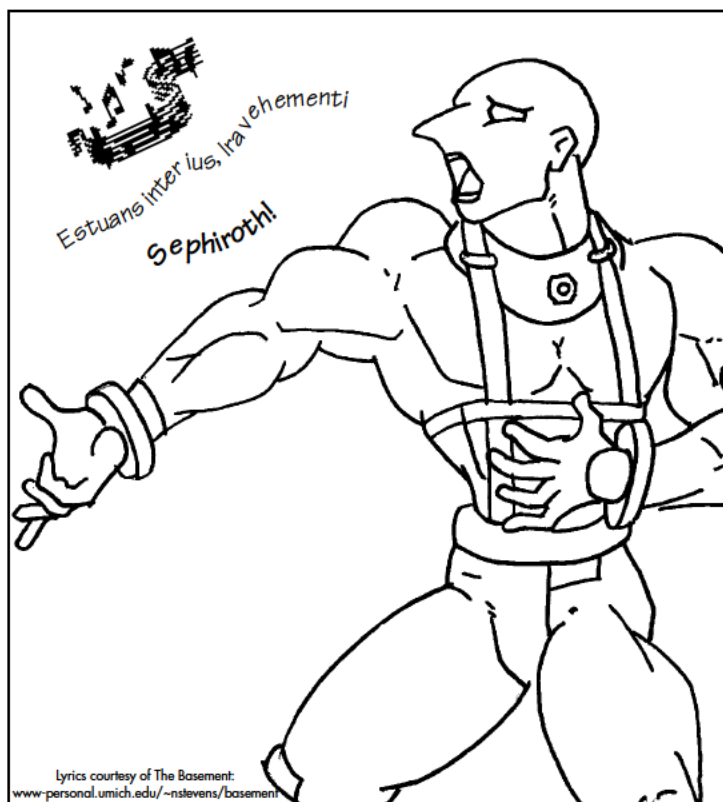
Acclaim brings cheap WWF action In Your House

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ending full-motion video sequences should put that to rest. At least, unlike *Wrestlemania*, it has endings.

And even though I just spent all this space trashing this game, I still kind of like it. It's nice to see some different faces in what is essentially still *Wrestlemania: TAG*, even with the lesser graphics. TAG was one of my favorite games for a while, and IYH is close enough to it to still be kind of fun. And it's got an excellent soundtrack. It's almost worth the \$5 WalMart is asking for it just for the wrestler's theme musics, all of which are conveniently provided in red-book audio.

Again, the bottom line on this bargain bin title is, you get what you pay for. It's certainly worth \$5, but not too much more.



System longevity continues to decline

Impending Katana release another sign of a possible crash in the future

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Well, it appears that the Sega Saturn has already gone the way of the dodo. With new systems being cleared out in some places for less than the price of an SNES or Genesis, and the Sega Katana (or whatever its current name may be) scheduled for release this year, I think we can safely say that the Saturn's pain is coming to an end.

Now, it's easy to point out what went wrong, and it's easy to trash Sega and the Saturn. It's also easy to defend the system, and to trash Sony and Nintendo. But that's been done to death.

What I want to point out here is the that the Sega Saturn is less than *three years old*. The Saturn debuted in limited quantities in April of 1995, and was in full release by about August. Originally scheduled for a September release, Sega decided to get a jump on the Playstation's release on September 9.

That may be the only thing that saved them. While hundreds of thousands of PSX's were prepurchased and snatched up in a matter of days, the Saturn had no such surge of sales, ever. Sony simply put out a superior machine at a similar price point. This brings me to my point: With technology advancing so quickly, is it ever safe to buy a home system now? System longevity has been sharply declining ever since the Atari 2600.

The Atari 2600 is still the reigning champion of system longevity. Released in 1978, it was the only system to really survive the crash, with new 2600 games being mass produced as late as 1988. Thanks to the backward compatibility of the

7800, a few titles still trickled out here and there until about 1991. But for the sake of argument, we'll call the 1988 the end point, giving the system a ten year life span.

The next system with mentionable success and longevity was the Nintendo Entertainment System. (Advance apologies to Inty and Coleco fans). Released in 1985, the NES lived for around seven years, with its finale titles like Tetris 2 coming out in 1992. Now, I will acknowledge that the 2600, at this point, was no longer cutting edge, and to many people, the NES was the only game in town. But it was still possible, and not too difficult, to purchase 2600 games at this point in time.

When the Genesis debuted a few years later, Nintendo and Sega battled it out. Despite the obvious technological advantage the Genny had, Nintendo still fought the good fight. So when the SNES came out in 1991, people weren't quite so ready to give up their 8-Bit Nintendo and all three competing systems flourished for a while.

This has changed. When the Nintendo 64 finally rolled off the assembly line, the 16 bit era was absolutely *dead*. There were virtually no Genesis or SNES games coming out. They simply could not compete with their big brothers, Playstation and Saturn, even though the jump from 16 to 32 bit was arguably not as big as the jump from 8 to 16. Unlike the first transition, there was no room for the 16 bit systems in the 32/64 bit market. They enjoyed a relatively short life span of approximately five years.

Now Sega is ready to roll out its own 64-bit super system a scant three years after the debut of the

Saturn. Genesis and SNES games are still sitting on shelves, retailers refusing to mark them down, while Saturn titles fly off the shelf for \$5.00 each. My question is, who in their right mind would support Sega's new system after this? Why would any developer invest any money after the disaster that was the Saturn? Don't get me wrong, I think it's a capable system, and I own one, and wouldn't give up my Night Warriors for anything. But I'll be damned if I'm paying for another system that I might not be able to get games for at the turn of the century. And I truly hope that most people are that smart.

But my bigger fear is this: When was the last time you saw systems with three year life spans? Right around the crash. It's a miracle we haven't had another one yet. The signs are all there: A decline in arcade business, too many systems on the market, new games at blowout prices, and tons of crappy games being released all the time.

There are good signs, though. People are buying those crappy games, and this absolutely amazes me. And with retro-gaming all the craze, people are acknowledging the greatness of games past, like with old movies and music. And I know I'm not the only one aware of the crash and cringing in fear each time I think it's returned. Maybe video gaming has finally reached a plateau in this country at which there is enough demand to support all this chaos. Video gaming is fairly mainstream now, and it's hard to find a kid who doesn't have *at least* one of the Big 3 systems. Maybe in fifteen years, we've finally learned a little bit of history, and we *won't* be doomed to repeat it.

Classic Namco titles return to the arcade scene

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Apparently, you can play two player simultaneous on any of the arranged versions of the Namco games. It would be kind of neat to play two player simultaneous Pac-Man. The game was fairly easy, so I got through about a dozen levels before I finally lost. And, showing that even Pac-Man can become a con-

temporary game, I believe it gives you the option to continue at that point.

This isn't much of a review, true, more of a "stream of consciousness" of what I could remember after playing the game last night. But with remakes like this out in the arcades now, I'm sure there's at least one member of the On Screen staff that might be willing to drive out just to see these games in action.

Next Issue

Svenyip's newfound writing madness continues with reviews of WCW vs. NWO and Wheel of Fortune for the N64, as well as the debut of his new fansubbed anime column.

Plus, we'll be starting a new series of articles on the hunt for rare classics, and what happens when one actually turns up.